

Testimony of Jennifer Burke-Adams  
Teacher at Common Ground High School,  
358 Springside Avenue, New Haven, CT 06515  
Testimony submitted to the Appropriations Committee  
March 24th, 2011

I am writing to support Senate Bill 1195 for Student-Based Funding. As an educator, it is known and understood that teachers do not choose the education profession to receive free weekends, holidays, and summers off from work. In fact quite the opposite is true. Nothing is free about being an educator, especially our time. Educators spend hours beyond the close of the school day, and as well on the weekends, correcting papers, designing effective, innovative lessons, differentiating for students so that every student's learning need is met in order for that student to aspire and achieve academic success. Not to mention, teachers often spend a good amount of time personally reflecting on how to better one's teaching practice. However, as a charter school educator, the idea of anything free, or should I say equal and fair, is virtually non-existent.

Not only do charter school teachers work longer than traditional public school educators, but we also meet after school hours to work for, and at school functions, as well as commit our time to our students on the weekends and even during the summer, as charter school teachers work to develop and improve curriculum during summer session workdays. We work long hours and have proven our abilities as teachers to truly assist students and raise test levels, as we continuously strive to lessen the achievement gap, and all while receiving thousands of dollars less per pupil than traditional public schools. As an educational institution, our particular organization has worked hard to be the only high school in the state of Connecticut to achieve AYP and again, without the equal funding as a traditional public school. Yet, despite our success, we still struggle with how to best service our students and close the achievement gap, so that all students are provided the opportunity to academically succeed.

Due to unequal distribution of funds we lack tutors and paraprofessionals, who could assist the many students that enter high school years below reading and math grade level. Due to unequal distribution of funds we lack the ability to support our English Language Learning students and special education students, as we currently have one special educator to service all identified students. Due to unequal distribution of funds we lack the technology to fully assist and ready our students to successfully compete and succeed in institutes of higher learning as well as ready students for the advancements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Due to unequal distribution of funds we lack some of the school supplies, books, and materials and therefore are not able to offer the same level of rich materials to enhance learning, as are traditional public schools. Due to unequal distribution of funds we lack substitute teachers and have to cover one another's classes, again losing time and energy in order to ensure that students' educational means are met. Due to unequal distribution of funds we lack teachers at our school and are subjecting our students to limited course offerings. Due to unequal distribution of funds we lack arts programs and are subjecting our students to limited cultural and diverse experiences. Due to unequal distribution of funds we lack support to fully assist students' emotional, behavioral, and psychological needs. Due to unequal distribution of funds we lack the ability to provide our students with an equal-opportunity educational experience.

Isn't every child in America entitled to a fair educational opportunity? Or, is the idea of discrimination, in terms of funding, acceptable when it comes to our Connecticut students? I

urge you to support Senate Bill 1195 for Student-Based Funding because; don't all students deserve a fair and equal opportunity to receive a free education?

Sincerely,  
Jennifer C. Burke